



Flint Fathers and Sons Project: *Enhancing Relationships and Promoting Healthful Behaviors Among African American Fathers and Sons in Michigan*

Issue

Youth substance use, violent behavior, early sexual initiation, and lack of sufficient physical activity are important national public health concerns. The majority of programs designed to prevent these health risks among youth have focused on increasing knowledge and changing individual attitudes and behaviors. However, the results of several recent studies provide support for involving parents more extensively in prevention efforts.

Although several parenting behaviors have been identified as protective against youth risk behaviors, one that is unique to ethnic minority families is race-related socialization. Race-related socialization is the process that parents use to buffer the effects of racism and promote a sense of ethnic pride, well-being, and competence within their children. Although there is growing evidence to indicate the importance of race-related socialization, it is often overlooked in prevention efforts with African American youth.

“Too many teenagers continue to engage in risky behaviors. All of us – teachers, community leaders, celebrities, politicians, and especially parents – must work harder to prepare our children with the knowledge and confidence that they need to make wise decisions.”

Tommy G. Thompson
Secretary, Health and Human Services

Response

An evaluation is underway in Michigan to assess the effect of a family centered, culturally-based prevention program developed collaboratively by several community-based organizations in Flint, Michigan, the Genesee County Health Department, the University of Michigan School of Public Health, and groups of non-resident African American fathers and sons. The goal of the program is to enhance the relationship between non-resident African American fathers and their preadolescent sons in an effort to prevent or reduce health compromising behaviors and encourage health promoting behaviors among both fathers and sons.

The specific aims of the project are to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the program in reducing or preventing substance use, violent behavior, and early sexual initiation;
- Assess the effectiveness of the program in increasing the quality of father-son relationships and promoting positive health behaviors; and
- Determine the extent to which use of community resources has an impact on the overall program goals.

This project will provide useful information about the effectiveness of an innovative program that strives to involve non-resident African American fathers more fully in the lives of their preadolescent sons.

March 2004

More Information

For more information about this research project, contact Cleopatra H. Caldwell, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, University of Michigan, School of Public Health, 1420 Washington Heights, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2029
Tel: (734) 647-3176
Fax: (734) 763-7379
cleoc@umich.edu

This research grant is funded through the second round of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Extramural Prevention Research Program (EPRP). The EPRP is committed to funding prevention research that has direct relevance for policy and practice by having researchers invite health professionals and communities to participate in the research process - including identifying research questions of importance to their community and interpreting and applying the study findings in their community. The EPRP supports many such community-based research grants throughout the United States.

For more information about CDC's EPRP, please contact the Office of Science and Extramural Research, Public Health Practice Program Office, CDC, 4770 Buford Highway, NE, MS K-56, Atlanta, GA 30341-3724
Tel: (770) 488-2070
Fax: (770) 488-8200
<http://www.phppo.cdc.gov/od/oser>

